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ABSTRACT

This review of the status of English language instruction in the Turkish community of Cyprus provides an overview of the social and political role of English in the society in general, and outlines the status of English use and instruction in the educational system at all levels (elementary, secondary, higher, adult, and teacher). Topics covered include: the characteristics and training of English language instructors, the type and availability of instructional materials, educational administration and planning in relation to English teaching, English instruction outside the educational system, British and other international support, commercial opportunities related to English instruction, language research and its policy implications, and other sources of information. The strengths of English instruction among Turkish Cypriots are the allocation of time for English instruction, introduction of new course materials, the potential for progress in internal and external support, and an officially sponsored examination. The weaknesses are the lack of qualified and expatriate teachers and incentives for teacher development, inadequate administration and financing, lack of effective policy on primary level teaching and teacher training, and excessive mechanical testing at the secondary level. (MSE)

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ENGLISH TEACHING PROFILE

Country: Cyprus

Date: February 1986

TURKISH CYPRIOTS

1. ROLE AND STATUS OF ENGLISH

A considerable number of those Turkish Cypriots who grew to adulthood during the colonial period have some knowledge of English, and many of those who were not only educated during British rule but were also employed in government service of the professions at that time speak English fluently. However, a noticeably fewer people under the age of forty speak English; those belonging to this age group who have a good knowledge of the language are likely to have spent several years working or studying in Britain.

The two principal reasons for this decline are the natural reduction in the use of English after independence, and the isolation of the Turkish Cypriot community with the disruption of its social, economic and educational life as a result of the inter-communal disputes of 196,-74. In November 1983, the Turkish Cypriots proclaimed their own Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. To date only Turkey has afforded recognition.

At present there is probably less need and certainly less opportunity for the use of English in the north than in the south, but the desire of Turkish Cypriots to maintain their links with Britain and to extend their contacts with other countries makes them well aware of the language's importance. Whatever the eventual settlement of the Cyprus problem, it seems likely that a knowledge of English will continue to be highly valued in both communities.

English is the language of instruction for most subjects at the most highly esteemed secondary school in the north, the Turk Maarif Koleji (TMK),

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Nicosia. In 1982, English-medium streams were started at two provincial schools, in Farmagusta and in Morphou.

English is also the language of instruction for all subjects at the Higher Technological Institute, Famagusta, which is due to be reconstituted as Dogu Akdeniz (East Mediterranean) University in 1985-86.

The TMK has a demanding curriculum because pupils are prepared not only for GCE O-level and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) but also for the normal Lise diploma and, more importantly, the Turkish Universities Entrance Examination. In recent years the number of British teachers has fallen to four out of a total staff of fifty-nine. Of these, two are teachers of English on British Council guaranteed contracts and two are locally recruited. At present, the keen competition for admission reflects both the relatively large number of Turkish university places secured by its pupils and (for those who can afford it) the possibility of higher education in Britain towards which the GCE and/or TOEFL, and competence in English are essential first steps. The provision by the USA of about twelve annual undergraduate scholarships per year since 1982 for study at American universities has led to great importance being attached to preparatory courses for the TOEFL examination.

The provincial English-medium streams operate on the same lines as TMK and use the same prescribed materials.

2. ENGLISH WITHIN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Turkish Office of Education (TOE) makes the following provision for English:

Primary schools (Ilk Okullar) ages 6-11

English is taught in the final two years of the six years of primary schooling although there is an experiment in introducing English at age 9+ for the last three years. The allocations are: 80 minutes a week in one- and two-teacher schools and 120 minutes a week in all other schools. There is some good teaching, but standards are generally low, mainly because of the scarcity of primary school teachers whose own English is adequate for the task.

Middle schools (Orta Okullar) ages 12-15

All pupils study English for seven 40-minute periods per week.

Secondary schools (Liseler) ages 15-18

All pupils study English for seven 40-minute periods per week, except at the Technical/Vocational Lises where the provision is four or five 40-minute periods per week.

Primary Teacher Training College

The College is very small and, as the student intake is closely geared to local requirements, there is often no intake at all. At present for example, there are fifty-seven students in the third year, thirty-four in the second year and no first-year students. The College may in fact close down.

All students have three hours of English in all three years, but in the final year students who have chosen to specialize in English take an additional four hours.

Higher Technological Institute

The HTI, founded in 1979, is small having only about 450 students, of whom more than 350 are in the first two years of a four-year course. This imbalance is accounted for by transfer to Turkish universities and by wastage and should be reduced when the Institute acquires university status. Initially, three faculties are planned: mechanical, civil, and electrical engineering.

English is studied in the first two years only. In the preparatory year (forty class-hours per week), English accounts for eighteen hours in the first semester and fourteen hours in the second. Of the forty class-hours per week in the freshman year, students take English for four hours.

There are eight teachers of English, including an American-trained applied linguist from Turkey who acted as co-ordinator for English studies in 1984-85. British and American TEFL materials are used.

Evening institutes

General English is taught at all three of the small evening institutes.

The only public examination generally available is the English Examination of the Turkish Office of Education (EETME), which is modelled on the Cambridge First Certificate in English (FCE), but is aimed at a rather lower level. It is set and marked once a year by the Turkish Office of Education and is open to anyone who has completed the first year of middle school. There are usually 400-500 candidates, nearly all of whom are of school age. (The total middle and secondary school population at any given time is 12,750-13,000). Only about 30% of these students are successful, of whom about half are TMK pupils.

TMK is the only college to undertake teaching of English literature and about half-a-dozen pupils follow the GCE O-level course, most of whom no longer register for the examination.

Since 1970, English has been a compulsory subject in the final examinations for the Lise diploma. However, the diploma is a poor guide to academic achievement and no guide at all to a pupil's performance in any given subject as it is an average obtained from the total of marks in all subjects.

The most important examination for most Turkish Cypriot pupils is the Turkish Universities Entrance Examination. This examination is now in two parts and only the candidates (approximately 50%) successful in the first part may proceed to the second. The second part includes a compulsory foreign language section consisting of thirty multiple-choice questions on (as much as in) each of three languages - English, French, and German - of which candidates must choose one. This section carries 10% of the total marks.

Syllabus design and course-book selection are centrally controlled. A major change of English language course-books at all levels was initiated by the British adviser (KELT) and the inspectors of English early in 1982. Most of the new materials were introduced in September of that year and the final phase will be implemented in September 1985.

There are two posts at the TOE for Inspector of English, one of which is filled by the KELT counterpart. The duties of these posts concern middle and secondary schools only (135 teachers of English) although none of the seven primary inspectors is an English specialist.

Among the changes in the booklists is the inclusion of more and better ESP (English for Special Purposes) material for the Commercial and Technical/ Vocational Lises.

There is no educational broadcasting service in the north, but the courses of Turkey's Open University, given largely by television and including an English language component, are being followed locally by about 250 officially enrolled Turkish Cypriot students.

Many, perhaps most, Turkish Cypriots can receive the programmes of the Greek Cypriot TV service (CBC) which frequently screens British and American films and prefers subtitles to dubbing. In addition, the British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS) provides radio programmes twenty-four hours a day and Cyprus is also the site of the BBC's East Mediterranean Relay Station which provides excellent reception of World Service transmissions on medium wave.

3. TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

There are 135 middle and secondary school teachers of English. There are also 707 primary school teachers (all of whom, in theory, are expected to be capable of teaching English at beginner level).

Apart from a few teachers of Turkish origin and four from Britain (all but one of whom are at the TMK), the entire teaching force is Turkish Cypriot.

At secondary level it is doubtful whether local resources can make up for the loss in 1982 of the UK-funded British teachers at the TMK (already being felt) or for the probable reduction in British help for in-service training in 1986. In addition, it is difficult to see how the provincial English-medium streams can develop effectively without native-speaking teachers.

At primary level there might be room for increased British help (at the TTC or in the field or both) if the Turkish Office of Education were to develop a clear policy of commitment to English in the primary schools and, more importantly, as a first step in this direction, at the TTC and in the primary inspectorate.

Initial training

Virtually all primary teachers have been trained in Cyprus but most middle and secondary teachers received their training in Turkey.

The primary teachers trained before independence at the bicommunal English-medium TTC in Morphou generally have a good command of English but their numbers are now being rapidly reduced by retirement. The English of those trained at the Turkey Cypriot primary TTC - the only TTC in the north - is noticeably poorer and very largely the product of what they learned, or did not learn, at school. In practice, therefore, probably less than a third of the primary teaching force is competent to teach English. This is not a very serious problem for the largest schools where suitable teachers tend to work

as English specialists but in many of the smaller schools English is either taught badly or not at all.

In general there is no shortage of teachers of English. That is to say, the number of applicants with the necessary paper qualifications is usually slightly in excess of the number of vacancies. However, the paper qualifications can be unreliable indications of classroom potential, notably, for example, in the case of some teachers recruited during the late 1970s when Turkey's universities and training colleges were disrupted by political disturbances.

There is a natural tendency for university graduates to teach mainly at senior (Lise) levels and TTC graduates to work mainly with Orta classes.

Few teachers transfer from the primary to the middle or secondary levels owing to the formidable qualification barrier.

Further training

Summer courses are organized jointly by the TOE and the British Council.

The 1981 and 1982 courses were on a larger scale than before and were designed to give all middle and secondary school teachers, as well as those primary teachers actually teaching English, a basic orientation in the use of the new course-books. Additional courses for primary teachers were given in the spring of 1982 and 1983 and in the summer of 1983 and 1984. A summer course for middle and secondary teachers took place in 1985. A comprehensive system of school-based, in-service seminars of up to one week has been established by the British advisers (KELT). In addition, guidance is given by the inspectors on an individual basis in the course of their visits to schools.

For the last ten years, two teachers of English, at both primary and secondary levels, have annually attended British Council summer schools in the UK. In addition, in 1984, twenty primary teachers attended a summer course designed especially by the University of Manchester, held in Manchester, and financed jointly by the British Council and the TOE. Four Turkish Cypriots (two teachers, one TTC lecturer, one Inspector of English) attended three-month training courses in the US in the summer of 1984, and a large number went in 1985. Three TMK teachers followed a ten-week course in the UK in 1981-82. One of these teachers returned for a further three-week visit in April 1984 as final preparation for assuming the duties of head of department. One teacher has recently returned from the University of Reading where he has successfully completed a full academic year's MA course as part of KELT counterpart training.

4. MATERIALS SUPPORT

The TOE provides all textbooks free of charge to primary and middle school pupils. Secondary school pupils have to buy their own. Supplies are usually adequate but sometimes late.

The main prescribed course-books are:

Primary 5 and 6 Look, Listen and Learn 1 - L.G. Alexander (Longman)

Middle 1, 2 and 3 Target 1, 2 and 3 - L.G. Alexander (Longman)

Secondary 1 Kernel Lessons Intermediate - R. O'Neill (Longman)

Secondary 2 Exchanges (Part A) - P. Prowse et al. (Heinemann)

Secondary 3 Exchanges (Part B) - P. Prowse et al. (Heinemann) (to be introduced in September 1986)

The commercial Lises' main course-books are Getting Down to Business in English - C. Pearson (Heinemann).

The TMK, being English-medium, uses a larger number of course-books in a more steeply graded sequence. Thus Target 1, 2 and 3, Practice and Progress, and the first half of Developing Skill, are all completed by the end of the third middle school year. Proposed changes for the English-medium sector have been rejected by the TOE for the last three years, with the exception of specific examination preparation texts for the revised FCE and GCE O-level exams. The quality of materials in use in this sector is considered inadequate by most teachers involved, as well as by the KELT advisers and the Inspector of English.

Among other books prescribed for middle school use are:

English Structure Practice - L.G. Drummond (Longman)

Intermediate Comprehension Passages - D. Byrne (Longman)

Read, Think and Answer - G. Green (OUP)

and (for Technical/Vocational Lises):

Understanding Technical English - K. Methold and D.D. Waters (Longman)

The British Council Library in northern Nicosia has a stock of approximately 1,200 graded readers intended mainly for the use of school-age pupils as well as a TEFL section of some 500 books for teachers' use.

In addition, teachers are encouraged to use the Council's Book Boxes which, in the north, are maintained and distributed by the KELT officers.

In the past five years a modest beginning has been made in several schools towards the establishment of class libraries of graded readers similar to those at the TMK.

The TOE provides every school with a limited number of the teachers' books which accompany the prescribed course-books. These have been supplemented by material written and distributed to all middle and secondary teachers by the KELT advisers.

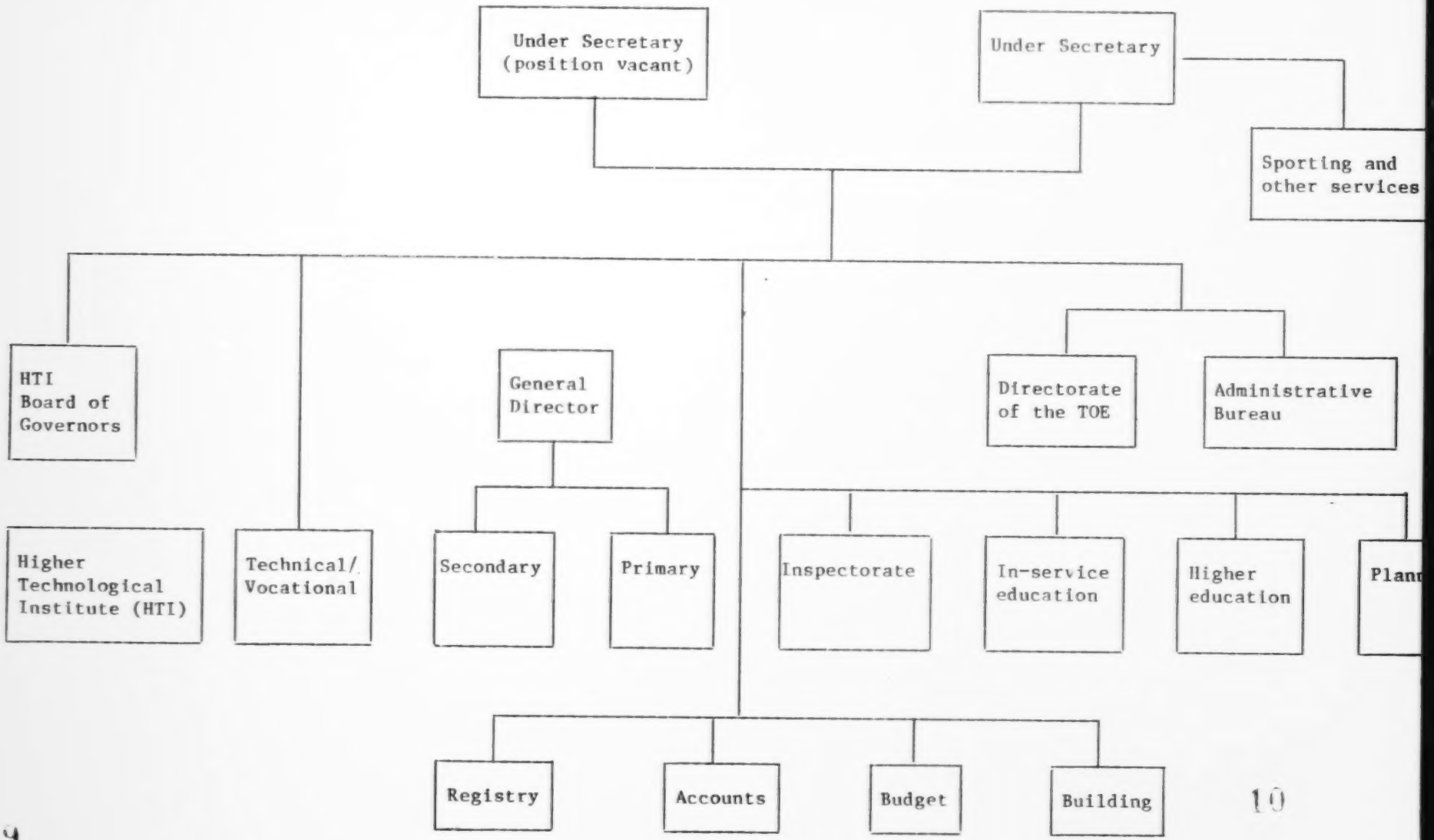
Many primary schools and most middle and secondary schools have at least one cassette recorder, but film and video equipment is beyond the means of all schools. A language laboratory was donated to the TMK as part of a UN development project in 1984. The Commercial 'Lise' in Nicosia is the only other school with a language laboratory.

5. EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN RELATION TO ENGLISH TEACHING

Under the 1960 Cyprus Constitution, education is a matter of the two communities separately. This division has been made deeper by events since independence.

For further details please see the chart on the following page.

The organization of the Turkish Office of Education under its politically appointed head



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6. DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING OF THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

The key factor is the Cyprus problem, the consequent keenly-felt international isolation of the Turkish Cypriot community, and the sharp financial constraints within which the education system has to work. Until 1963 Turkish Cypriots attended the quasi-private and bicommunal English School in southern Nicosia. Thereafter, with the division of Nicosia and tendency of the two communities to separate elsewhere in the island, most Turkish Cypriots who would have attended the English school attended an improvised school in northern Nicosia from which beginnings the academically elite English-medium Turk Maarif Koleji grew. Only since 1970 has English been compulsory in the final examinations for the secondary school leaving certificate (Lise diploma).

7. ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

There are three or four small, part-time coaching centres and in Nicosia there is a small private language school. However, these figures give no real indication of the great demand for private coaching (especially in the sciences, mathematics and English) because most of it is done on an individual basis by publically employed teachers in their free time.

The causes and effects of private teaching on this scale are difficult to assess objectively, but clearly a great many parents feel obliged to buy for their children something which, in their opinion, the schools do not provide, while a great many schoolteachers devote much out-of-school time and energy to other paid work.

8. BRITISH SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

There are no Council ELT staff working solely in the north. Council-recruited teachers etc include:

Two KELT advisers at Turkish Office of Education

Two Council-recruited teachers of English, on guaranteed contracts at Turk Maarif Kileji

A small Direct Teaching of English (DTE) operation co-ordinated by Director of Studies (DOS) in the south. Courses are arranged for civil servants and taught by locally recruited native speakers.

The KELT officers' duties are to advise on the teaching of English at middle and secondary level; to assist the TOE, as required, on all matters concerning English language teaching; and to liaise with the British Council on all ELT activity in northern Cyprus.

Following the introduction of new course-books at all levels in 1981 and associated orientation and follow-up seminars for teachers, the KELT project's central activity since 1983 has been in-service training and the establishment of a system of single school workshops based on the teachers' normal timetables and classes, but involving joint planning, observation, and evaluation of lessons.

The KELT project in the north is due to end in 1986.

Apart from the Council-recruited teachers, only two British-born native speakers are currently employed as teachers of English within the education system.

Except at the HTI, all the textbooks are British. ODA book presentations have been made to the TMK, HTI, TTC, the mobile library, and the public library in northern Nicosia.

Virtually all the teachers of English saw the Council's 1982 EFL Book Exhibition arranged as part of the summer course programme in the north.

Beginning in 1981, general English courses have been held for Turkish public servants. It is hoped to extend DTEO teaching into ESP fields, but the difficulties experienced by students in meeting costs limit expansion.

9. AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

The provision of about twelve undergraduate scholarships a year under the Cyprus-American Scholarship Programme (CASP), which initiated a five-year project in 1982-83, provides an indirect incentive to ELT. Candidates are required to pass TOEFL.

Three-month summer courses in the USA for serving teachers of English became available from 1984. (See Section 3: Further training).

10. OTHER AGENCY SUPPORT

The UN High Commission for Refugees and Islamic Development has provided financial support for the English-medium HTI at Famagusta, shortly due to become Dogu Akdeniz University.

11. COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

The prescribed school texts have recently been changed, as noted in Section 4 above, and there are unlikely to be any further changes in the near future. The market for hardware is limited both by the size of the community and the financial constraints under which it operates, except where aid funds make it possible to buy equipment. There were 112 Turkish Cypriot candidates for British examinations related to English language teaching in 1984 and 138 in 1985. There is some local private English teaching but no British concerns are involved. The Council has run some short English courses for Turkish Cypriot public servants.

The probable extension of involvement of English-medium institutions of higher education in Turkey with the HTI is likely to be more US- than UK-orientated. Some publishing is done locally in English, e.g. Kinross The Rebirth of a Nation, the biography of Ataturk.

12. CREATIVE WRITING

None.

13. CURRENT RESEARCH

The results of a recent investigation by a German research team into the needs and opportunities for in-service training of teachers in the north may influence thinking at the TOE and, indirectly, have implications for ELT policy.

14. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

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Statistical Yearbook 1980 (Turkish Cypriot).

15. GENERAL STATEMENT

The strengths are:

Adequate allocation of time to ELT

Introduction of new course materials

Potentially, the timetabled provision for English in the last two years of primary school

Potentially, the existence of an officially sponsored English examination

Potentially, the role of the KELT counterpart

Potentially, the recent increase in American support

The weakness are:

Too few adequately qualified teachers

Lack of incentives for teachers to improve their professional skills

Decline in the number of expatriate teachers (especially in view of the extension of English-medium schooling)

Lack of a head of department system resulting in inadequate supervision and co-ordination.

Over-large classes with too great an ability range, often including poorly motivated pupils

Overall inadequate finance (responsible inter alia for insufficient audio equipment and supplementary materials)

The lack of an effective policy for primary level English in general and the ELT training of primary teachers in particular

The loss (1983) and non-replacement of one of the two inspectors of English for middle and secondary schools and the lack of a specialist inspector for primary English

The excessive amount of mechanical testing at secondary level